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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly

Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

During the reporting period, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa held two ministerial meetings. The forty-third meeting was held in Sao Tome from 28 November to 1 December 2016 and the forty-fourth meeting was held in Yaoundé from 29 May to 2 June 2017. Both meetings were organized by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), in its capacity as secretariat of the Committee.

During the two meetings, the Committee reviewed the political and security situation in Central Africa and made specific recommendations on actions to be taken to address the prevailing security challenges, which were considered under the agenda of the Committee. During its forty-fourth meeting, the Committee dedicated a session to the regional dimension of the situation in the Central African Republic and adopted a declaration on the issue (see annex I).

The Committee examined the status of the signature and ratification of legal instruments on disarmament and the non-proliferation of arms in the subregion, in particular the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly (Kinshasa Convention) and the Arms Trade Treaty. It welcomed the entry into force of the Kinshasa Convention on 8 March 2017 and urged those Member States that had not yet done so to ratify or accede to both instruments.

* A/72/150.

** Due to technical processing issues, the present report has been submitted after the 10 week deadline.

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The Committee assessed progress achieved in the implementation of the regional strategy and plan of action for combating terrorism and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, which had been adopted at its forty-first meeting. The Committee recommended that the relevant peace and security organs of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) endorse the strategy to enable its secretariat to follow up on implementation, which remained the responsibility of member States.

The threat posed by Boko Haram, as well as the measures being taken at the regional level to counter the group, in particular the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force and the long-planned joint summit of ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States, remained high on the agenda of the Committee. In this regard, the Bureau of the Committee undertook a field visit to Cameroon and Chad from 31 October to 3 November 2016.

The Committee paid increased attention to the issue of women and peace and security, in particular in relation to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the participation of women in decision-making. At its forty-third meeting, the Committee adopted a declaration calling upon its member States to increase the representation of women in delegations attending its biannual meetings (see annex II).

At the same meeting, the Committee decided to commission an evaluation of its work after 25 years of existence. An independent evaluation was carried out in close consultation with the States members of the Committee and with all relevant partners. The findings of the evaluation were presented at the forty-fourth meeting and, as a result, a declaration was adopted on the revitalization of the work of the Committee, in particular its working methods and relations with the relevant peace and security organs of ECCAS (see annex III).

The forty-fifth meeting is scheduled to be held in Kigali before the end of 2017.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/79, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa", the General Assembly welcomed the efforts of the Committee towards addressing cross-border security threats in Central Africa. The Assembly reaffirmed its support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts in Central Africa and to further sustainable peace, stability and development in the subregion.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly also expressed its satisfaction to the Secretary-General for his support to the Committee, expressed appreciation for the role played by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), in its capacity as secretariat of the Committee, and strongly encouraged the States members of the Committee and international partners to support the work of the Office. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the assistance needed by the Committee to ensure the success of its regular biannual meetings. It also called upon him to submit to the Assembly, at its seventy-second session, a report on the implementation of resolution 71/79.

3. The present report is submitted pursuant to the above request and covers the activities carried out by the Committee from September 2016 to August 2017.

II. Activities of the Committee

4. The forty-third meeting of the Committee was held in Sao Tome, from 28 November to 1 December 2016, and the forty-fourth meeting was held in Yaoundé, from 29 May to 2 June 2017. Both meetings were attended by Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe. Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were unable to attend the forty-third meeting, while Rwanda was unable to attend the forty-fourth meeting.

5. The following entities also participated as observers in one or both meetings: the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Lake Chad Basin Commission; the Multinational Joint Task Force, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. During the forty-third meeting, the Committee requested that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) attend its meetings and give briefings on their activities and on the regional dimension in their areas of operation. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) were invited to attend the forty-fourth meeting, as was the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), which was granted observer status.

6. The main issues on the agenda of the Committee and its activities during the period under review are set out below.

A. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa

7. The Committee continued to serve as a forum for developing a shared understanding of the peace and security challenges in Central Africa and collective approaches for addressing them. In particular, the Committee examined relevant developments within each country, while also reviewing the principal peace and security challenges across the subregion.

8. The Committee noted that its member States continued to face uncertain democratic and electoral processes, social tensions in the context of a heavy dependency on commodities and a slowdown of the world economy, and impediments to the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law. Those challenges were compounded by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, transnational organized crime and the activities of armed and terrorists groups at the regional level, as well as by the persistence of instability and conflicts around the subregion with serious human rights and humanitarian consequences, including 1.4 million refugees and 2.5 million internally displaced persons across Central Africa. In this regard, the Committee took note with concern of the security crisis in the Central African Republic and parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and tensions between Burundi and Rwanda, as well as in the Pool region in the Congo and the North-West and South-West regions in Cameroon. During the forty-fourth meeting, some member States also raised concerns about the issue of alternation of power in the subregion and suggested that a thematic debate on peaceful and democratic alternation of power be held at the following meeting of the Committee.

9. As requested by the Executive Committee of the Secretary-General on 16 March 2017, the secretariat of the Standing Advisory Committee dedicated a session of its forty-fourth meeting to the regional dimension of the situation in the Central African Republic. The representatives of the Government of the Central African Republic, the ECCAS secretariat, the African Union Commission and MINUSCA gave presentations on the various challenges to peace and security. FAO also raised the issue of transhumance and its security implications. The Committee subsequently adopted a ministerial declaration in which, inter alia, it condemned the attacks against civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeepers; called for the harmonization of peace and reconciliation initiatives, while committing to the fight against impunity; and called upon the Security Council to mandate MINUSCA to support the defence and security forces of the Central African Republic in their efforts to stabilize the country.

B. Disarmament and arms control

1. Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly and the Arms Trade Treaty

10. The Committee examined the status of the signature and ratification of legal instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation of arms in the subregion, in particular the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly (Kinshasa Convention) (see A/65/517-S/2010/534, annex), which was negotiated by States members of the Committee, and the Arms Trade Treaty (see resolution 67/234 B). It welcomed the entry into force of the Kinshasa Convention on 8 March 2017 and urged those member States that had not yet done so to ratify or accede to those instruments. To date, Burundi,

the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Rwanda have yet to ratify the Kinshasa Convention. Article 34, paragraph 3, of the Convention provides for the convening of the first Conference of States Parties to the Convention one year after its entry into force. In terms of the Arms Trade Treaty, the Central African Republic and Chad are States parties to the Treaty, while Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Congo, Gabon, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe are signatories.

2. Update on the activities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs

11. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, which is part of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, continued to be an important partner of the Committee on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation issues. The representative of the Regional Centre gave a briefing on relevant disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation activities in support of the States members of the Committee. The activities focused in particular on technical assistance and capacity-building to prevent the trafficking in small arms and light weapons through improved physical security and stockpile management, including of ammunition. In addition, the Regional Centre provided training and technical assistance to the States of the Lake Chad Basin region on securing small arms, light weapons and ammunition, with a view to preventing their diversion to non-State armed groups. The Regional Centre also provided support to French-speaking countries by drafting a disarmament guide in French with the support of OIF.

C. Armed violence and terrorism in Central Africa

1. Regional strategy and plan of action for combating terrorism and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa

12. Following extensive consultations between the States members of the Committee, the ECCAS secretariat and UNOCA, the Committee reiterated at its forty-fourth meeting that the coordination of and follow-up to the implementation of the regional strategy and plan of action for combating terrorism and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, which had been developed within the framework of the Committee and adopted at its forty-first meeting, in Libreville in November 2015, would be placed under the responsibility of the ECCAS secretariat. The Committee also called upon the ECCAS peace and security organs, notably the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, to endorse the strategy officially, and upon its member States to take ownership of the strategy.

2. Boko Haram

13. During the forty-third and forty-fourth meetings of the Committee, representatives of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Multinational Joint Task Force provided extensive briefings on the activities of Boko Haram and the measures taken to counter them. It was noted that the operations of the Task Force had successfully degraded Boko Haram's capability to hold territory and conduct large-scale attacks. At the same time, Boko Haram remained a serious regional threat and retained the capacity to carry out attacks against military and civilian targets, in particular through suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices. The representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission highlighted the issue of defectors and of persons who were captured from Boko Haram, as well as the need for a coordinated and comprehensive response to tackle their disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration. The representative of the Multinational Joint Task Force stressed the instrumental nature of cooperation with the local population, in particular vigilante committees, and of the intelligence contributions from international partners. He also stressed the challenges and gaps

that the Task Force continued to face regarding mobility, logistics and demining, as well as the need for amphibious capacity and night-viewing goggles.

14. The Bureau of the Committee undertook a visit to Cameroon and Chad from 31 October to 3 November 2016. The aim of the visit was to: express regional solidarity; raise awareness among States members of ECCAS about the needs of Cameroon and Chad to better counter Boko Haram; raise awareness among those States about the issue of terrorism and the need to adopt a holistic approach; and stress the importance of the operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea In Yaoundé, the delegation met with the Deputy Foreign Minister in Charge of Relations with the Islamic World, as well as with senior officials in charge of technical cooperation at the Ministry of Defence. In N'Djamena, the delegation met with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation and the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Public Security and Immigration. The delegation also visited the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force in N'Djamena, the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea in Yaoundé and the town of Kousséri, Cameroon, which sits on the border with Chad.

15. During the forty-fourth meeting, the representative of UNOCA briefed the Committee on the visit of the Security Council to countries affected by Boko Haram, in March 2017, and the subsequent adoption of Security Council resolution 2349 (2017) in relation to peace and security in Africa.

16. The Committee reiterated its call to its member States and the ECCAS secretariat to intensify their efforts to hold the long-planned joint summit of ECCAS and ECOWAS on Boko Haram, as requested by the ECCAS Heads of State and Government in February 2015.

3. Lord's Resistance Army

17. The Committee expressed concern about the withdrawal of the Uganda People's Defence Forces from the African Union Regional Task Force combatting the Lord's Resistance Army in the eastern part of the Central African Republic, as well as the end of the mandate of the United States Special Forces supporting them. The Committee noted that the withdrawals would likely result in a security vacuum exploitable by the Lord's Resistance Army and other armed groups. While significantly diminished, the Lord's Resistance Army retained the capacity to harm civilians in remote areas in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

D. Poaching and transnational organized crime

18. The Committee reviewed developments regarding poaching and transnational organized crime, including in relation to illegal trade in wildlife and trafficking in persons and drugs. UNODC reported that little progress had been made in dismantling criminal networks, which exploit differences and loopholes in national legal frameworks, institutional weaknesses, corruption, the limitations of criminal justice systems and porous borders. With regard to poaching, the ECCAS secretariat informed the Committee of its intention to organize in the near future a conference in N'Djamena on eco-security and the management of the human-fauna conflict.

19. With regard to drug trafficking, UNODC briefed the Committee on the effectiveness of the Airport Communication Programme, a multi-agency, anti-trafficking initiative aimed at strengthening the detection, interdiction and

investigative capacities of participating airports in illicit drug source and transit countries. To date, the Programme has been set up in Cameroon.

E. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

20. During its forty-third and forty-fourth meetings, the Committee discussed progress made in the implementation of the recommendations adopted at the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, held in Yaoundé on 24 and 25 June 2013, in particular the operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea and the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa, located in Pointe-Noire, Congo. On 22 February 2017, the ECCAS Secretary-General, the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission appointed the statutory managers of the Centre. The full operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre is scheduled for September 2017, three years after its inauguration. Its workplan for the period from 2017 to 2021 includes capacity-building for stakeholders in the maritime sector, the exchange of information and the provision of assistance with the demarcation and delimitation of maritime boundaries. While the Interregional Coordination Centre and its parent organizations intend to mobilize resources from international partners, the Committee commended Cameroon and the Congo for their support to the Interregional Coordination Centre and the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa, respectively, and called upon its member States to honour their financial commitments to enable the predictable and sustainable functioning of both Centres.

F. Implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in Central Africa

21. During the reporting period, the Committee increased its focus on the issue of women and peace and security, in particular in relation to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the participation of women in decision-making.

22. The representative of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) reported that women were the main victims of conflicts and violence in Central Africa, making up a significant proportion of refugees, internally displaced persons and victims of sexual violence. Women remained underrepresented in decision-making processes, bodies and high-level functions, including peace and electoral processes, parliaments and ministerial positions, as well as in the security sector. At the time of reporting, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda had developed national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and Cameroon was at an advanced stage of doing so.

23. At its forty-third meeting, the Committee adopted a declaration calling upon its member States to increase the representation of women in their delegations attending its meetings. At its forty-fourth meeting, the States members of the Committee further called for increased engagement with UN-Women in the subregion.

G. Cooperation with international and regional organizations, with the support of United Nations entities

24. Through their active participation and contributions, the ECCAS secretariat, the African Union Commission and various United Nations entities, including MINUSCA, MONUSCO, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, UNODC, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, and UN-Women, continued to provide invaluable assistance to the efforts of the Committee to address peace and security challenges in Central Africa.

25. Regarding the institutional development of ECCAS in relation to peace and security issues, the Committee was informed about the ECCAS institutional reform launched at the sixteenth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in N'Djamena in May 2015. The reform had been placed under the authority of the Chair of the Assembly, President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, with the support of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, La Francophonie and Regional Integration and in charge of Gabonese people living abroad. One of the key objectives was to modernize and strengthen the ECCAS secretariat and give it a greater political role, with a strengthened conflict prevention mandate. The seventh extraordinary session of the Council of Ministers of ECCAS took place in Libreville, from 25 to 27 April 2017. A budget of 1.9 billion CFA francs (approximately $3.37 million) had been allocated to the reform, which was expected to be carried out from May 2017 to August 2018. The aim of the institutional reform, which was complemented by a broader reform led by Cameroon, was to merge the Central African Economic and Monetary Community and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries into ECCAS.

H. Evaluation of the Committee

26. At its forty-third meeting, the Committee decided to commission an evaluation of its work with a view to enhancing its relevance and effectiveness after 25 years of existence. In response to the request, and following the approval of the terms of reference for the evaluation by the President of the Committee, UNOCA, together with the Department of Political Affairs, recruited an independent expert to carry out the evaluation.

27. The evaluation process was based on an inclusive approach that included frequent consultations with States members of the Committee, including national focal points and permanent representatives of States members of the Committee to the United Nations in New York, as well as observers, in particular the ECCAS secretariat. A workshop was held in Libreville on 27 and 28 April 2017 to validate the preliminary findings and recommendations and the final report was presented at the forty-fourth meeting of the Committee.

28. The evaluation of the work of the Committee confirmed the continued support for and trust in the mechanism. While the Committee decided that its mandate and substantive focus remained valid, it requested that the agenda of its statutory meetings be more dynamic and attuned to peace and security developments. The Committee noted the need to continue to pay particular attention to disarmament and arms control. Accordingly, subject to the availability of resources in the trust fund of the Committee, it agreed to conduct two activities per year, one dedicated to disarmament and another dedicated to pressing peace and security issues.

29. The Committee decided to maintain the frequency and format of its statutory meetings. In order to enhance ministerial-level attendance, the Committee agreed to

hold closed ministerial meetings on specific issues. The Committee also agreed to institutionalize the national focal point function to improve the implementation of recommendations by relevant national authorities. Moreover, during the evaluation, States members of the Committee stressed the importance of developing a communications strategy for the Committee. UNOCA, in its capacity as secretariat of the Committee, was tasked to work on such a strategy and present it at the forty-fifth meeting of the Committee.

30. The Committee encouraged greater collaboration and synergy with ECCAS, in particular its peace and security organs, such as the Defence and Security Commission of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, including on the implementation of the regional strategy and plan of action for combating terrorism and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa. It also called for increased cooperation between the secretariat of the Committee and the ECCAS secretariat.

31. The Committee adopted a declaration on its own revitalization (see annex III) and requested Cameroon to provide a briefing on its implementation at its forty-fifth meeting.

III. Administrative and financial matters

32. The Committee recalled the Declaration on the trust fund of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa of 2009 (Libreville Declaration) (see A/64/85-S/2009/288, annex), adopted at its twenty-eighth meeting, and reviewed the financial status of the trust fund. The Committee expressed deep concern about the lack of voluntary contributions and urged its member States to fulfil their financial commitments, in keeping with the spirit of the Libreville Declaration and the Bangui Declaration (A/71/293, annex V). The member States committed to increasing their efforts to contribute to the trust fund and requested a balance of the contributions to date per country. UNOCA provided the requested information in the final report of the forty-fourth ministerial meeting. In response to the call, Angola, the Central African Republic, Gabon and Rwanda made contributions. As at 27 July, the balance of the trust fund stood at $142,226. It should be recalled that, during its forty-second meeting, the Committee had adopted the Bangui Declaration regarding the question of instituting a binding annual contribution of $10,000 per member State, appealing to the Heads of State and Government of the member States to issue a decision to that effect.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

33. The Secretary-General welcomes the Committee's continuing efforts to consolidate peace and security in Central Africa, in collaboration with subregional organizations, in particular ECCAS, and with the African Union, the United Nations system and other international partners.

34. While diminished, Boko Haram remains a serious threat to peace and security for States in the Lake Chad Basin region, including Cameroon and Chad, with significant humanitarian, human rights and security consequences. The recent spate of suicide bombings in Cameroon and Nigeria is a stark reminder that Boko Haram is resilient and will not be defeated without a holistic approach that goes beyond security and includes socioeconomic development, good governance and the protection of human rights. In this context, the Secretary-General commends the Multinational Joint Task Force and the armed forces of the States concerned for their achievements, while also urging them to conduct their operations in strict

compliance with international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law. He calls upon the international community to support the States and communities of the Lake Chad Basin region in their efforts to confront the threat posed by Boko Haram and recover from its scourge, including through managing the increasing flow of surrendering and defecting fighters and dependents. The Secretary-General strongly encourages ECCAS and ECOWAS to hold the planned joint summit of Heads of State on Boko Haram as soon as possible.

35. The Secretary-General calls upon the States members of the Committee to take ownership of the regional strategy and plan of action for combating terrorism and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, which are a valuable tool developed through the Committee to address armed violence and terrorism. He looks forward to the endorsement of the strategy by the peace and security organs of ECCAS and to its follow-up by the ECCAS secretariat with the support of the United Nations, including UNOCA.

36. The Secretary-General welcomes the entry into force of the Kinshasa Convention, which is an important step forward in the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the spread of armed violence in Central Africa. The Convention, alongside other African subregional instruments on small arms, creates a mutually reinforcing disarmament and arms control network across the continent and contributes to the implementation of aspiration 4 of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. He calls upon the four States members of the Committee that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention. Similarly, he calls upon the States members of the Committee that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Arms Trade Treaty.

37. The Secretary-General is concerned about continued violence perpetrated by armed groups in the Central African Republic. He welcomes ongoing peace and reconciliation initiatives that are aimed at finding a durable solution to the protracted crisis facing the country. He calls upon all stakeholders to work closely together to that end. In that regard, his Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA, in close collaboration with his Special Representative for the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA, will continue to advocate for the provision of support by Member States of the region, which, in the declaration adopted in Yaoundé (annex I), have pledged to support the stabilization and recovery of the Central African Republic.

38. In this context, the Secretary-General is also concerned about the likely security vacuum resulting from the withdrawal of the forces deployed to combat the Lord's Resistance Army, in particular in the eastern part of the Central African Republic. He encourages concerned States to adjust existing arrangements to ensure that the Lord's Resistance Army does not exploit such a vacuum.

39. The Secretary-General welcomes the progressive operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea and encourages the States members of the Committee, ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to remain committed to implementing fully the recommendations adopted at the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea. He reiterates his call to Member States and partners to provide the resources necessary to ensure the full and sustainable operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre and the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa. In this regard, UNOCA, in collaboration with UNOWAS, will continue to assist organizations in both subregions.

40. The Secretary-General remains concerned by the continued reports of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and their links to the financing of armed

groups in Central Africa. He recognizes the Committee's active engagement on the issue, commends its member States for the measures taken to counter the problem and encourages them to take active steps to implement the Libreville Declaration on combating poaching in Central Africa adopted by the Committee (A/71/293, annex IV), calling for greater synergies and cooperation on the issue.

41. The Secretary-General welcomes the adoption in Yaoundé of the declaration on the revitalization of the activities of the Committee (annex III). He believes that implementing the measures that have been adopted will greatly assist in making the Committee more relevant and effective. In particular, he encourages the Committee and ECCAS to strengthen their cooperation and enhance synergies to address subregional challenges in a complementary and consistent manner. He also encourages the States members of the Committee to redouble their efforts to implement the declaration adopted in Sao Tome, at its forty-third meeting, in which it calls for increased women's participation in the delegations of Member States (annex II).

42. The Committee urgently needs additional funding to continue its work. The Secretary-General therefore urges all States members of the Committee to fulfil their financial commitments, in line with the Libreville Declaration of 2009, highlighting the need for them to contribute regularly to the Committee trust fund, so that the Committee may continue to carry out its activities and serve as an essential confidence-building mechanism among the States in the subregion.

43. The Secretary-General is grateful for the support provided by the Department of Political Affairs, UNOCA and his Special Representative for Central Africa and head of UNOCA, François Louncény Fall, for the functioning of the Committee. He also thanks FAO, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, UNODC, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for their participation in the meetings of the Committee. He looks forward to the conclusions of the Committee emanating from its forty-fifth and forty-sixth meetings, to be held in Rwanda and the Congo, respectively.

Annex I

[Original: French]

Yaoundé declaration on the situation in the Central African Republic

We, the ministers and heads of delegation of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, gathered in Yaoundé on the occasion of the forty-fourth ministerial meeting of the Committee,

Recalling the Bangui Declaration on the Central African Republic adopted at the forty-second meeting of the Committee on 10 June 2016,

Recalling also the many long-standing efforts and resolutions of the executive bodies of the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States aimed at resolving the political and security crisis in the Central African Republic,

Guided by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitutive Act of the African Union, and by a subregional vision grounded in solidarity among States members and respect for fundamental rights,

Reaffirming our strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Central African Republic, and recalling the importance of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a member State,

Seriously concerned about the fragile security situation in the Central African Republic caused by the continued presence of armed and criminal groups, which have links to such activities as poaching and transhumance,

Deeply concerned that the illicit trafficking, trade and exploitation of natural resources, including gold, diamonds and wild flora and fauna, are having a negative impact on the economies and development of all States in the subregion and continue to threaten peace and stability,

Reiterating our concern about activities linked to transnational crime in the subregion, which is at risk of becoming a breeding ground for mercenaries fomenting instability and violent extremism in the Central African Republic,

Taking note of the severity of the crisis in the Central African Republic, and expressing our strong determination to implement our joint decisions through bilateral and regional mechanisms in order to support and assist the Central African Republic in the areas of national reconciliation, security sector reform and post-conflict recovery,

1. *Strongly condemn* the acts of violence and violations of fundamental rights, which target in particular women, children and other vulnerable persons;

2. *Strongly condemn also* the attacks by armed groups against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, humanitarian workers and the national defence and security forces;

3. *Encourage* international organizations and their technical and financial partners in their actions to promote peacebuilding and security in the Central African Republic, including the protection of the constitutional legality regained at great cost with the support of the international community;

4. *Express* our determination to harness our cooperation and solidarity in the service of democracy, respect for fundamental rights, the strengthening of the rule of law, State institutional capacity-building and conflict prevention;

5. *Invite* the members of the Bureau of the International Support Group on the Central African Republic and other regularly involved partners to work closely together, in order to harmonize peace and reconciliation initiatives;

6. *Decide* to combat impunity more effectively by strengthening our judicial systems and harmonizing the prosecutorial rules of our States;

7. *Request* member States to unite their efforts to manage transhumance corridors that can facilitate the circulation of the small arms and light weapons, which is a source of insecurity in the subregion;

8. *Invite* the international community to strengthen the application of restrictions on the trade in natural resources from conflict zones, including through the Kimberley Process;

9. *Recommend* that States members of the Economic Community of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and the international community as a whole, make a greater effort to have the Security Council ease the arms embargo in order to enable the equipping and rearmament of the national defence and security forces, with a view to the restoration of State authority throughout the national territory of the Central African Republic;

10. *Strongly urge* the Security Council to give the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic a mandate to support and assist the Central African defence and security forces in their stabilization efforts, in particular in the east of the country in the context of the withdrawal of the United States and Ugandan forces combating the Lord's Resistance Army;

11. *Decide* to remain seized of the situation in the Central African Republic.

DONE at Yaoundé on 2 June 2017

Annex II

[Original: French]

Sao Tome declaration on the participation of women in the statutory meetings of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

We, the ministers and heads of delegation of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, gathered in Sao Tome from 28 November to 1 December 2016,

Recalling our commitment to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, which reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution,

Recognizing the efforts made by States members of the Committee to improve the representation of women at the political level,

Taking into consideration the low representation of women in the delegations of the States members of the Committee,

Conscious of the need to promote the participation of women in all discussion, consultation and decision-making forums,

Conscious also that women are among the victims most affected by conflict situations,

Recognizing the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the subregion,

1. *Invite* member States to increase the representation of women in delegations participating in the statutory meetings of the Committee;

2. *Decide* to evaluate the situation regularly at meetings of the Committee.

DONE at Sao Tome on 1 December 2016

Annex III

[Original: French]

Yaoundé declaration on the revitalization of the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

We, the ministers and heads of delegation of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, gathered in Yaoundé on the occasion of the forty-fourth ministerial meeting of the Committee,

Recalling the final document adopted at Yaoundé on 21 June 1991 by the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States, concerning confidence-building measures, security, disarmament and development in the subregion,[1]

Recalling General Assembly resolution 46/37 B of 6 December 1991, which led to the establishment of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa,

Taking into consideration the importance of the confidence-building measures and their contribution to regional disarmament and international security, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Noting with satisfaction the significant institutional achievements of the Committee with regard to the promotion of disarmament at the regional and subregional levels, efforts to combat the circulation of weapons, and the economic and social development of the Central African subregion,

Reaffirming the importance and relevance of the Committee as an instrument of preventive diplomacy in the subregional architecture for the promotion of peace and security in Central Africa,

Welcoming the efforts of the United Nations and its assistance with the establishment and operation of the Committee,

Taking into account the recommendations of the report on the evaluation of the Committee commissioned at its forty-third ministerial meeting,

Wishing to enhance the contribution of the Committee to the achievement of the objectives of peace, security and development in the subregion,

1. *Instruct* our Committee focal points and permanent missions to the United Nations in New York to take a much more dynamic approach to the drawing up of the agendas for statutory meetings and to improve the focus of the topics addressed, in order to facilitate the formulation of specific and operational recommendations;

2. *Institutionalize* the role of Committee focal point and encourage frequent coordination among the focal points, in particular with regard to follow-up on the recommendations concerning the competent national institutions;

3. *Establish* a standing agenda item for statutory meetings under which each State shall provide an update on the progress it has made towards the implementation of the recommendations;

[1] A/46/307-S/22805, annex.

4. *Approve* the introduction of closed ministerial meetings in parallel with statutory meetings;

5. *Call for* regular contributions to the Trust Fund;

6. *Encourage* the development of collaboration and synergies between the Committee and the Economic Community of Central African States through consultation between their respective secretariats and interaction between the Committee and the organs of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, in particular the Commission for Defence and Security, including with a view to promoting the implementation of the regional strategy for combating terrorism and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa adopted by the Committee;

7. *Call for* the organization of an activity related to the topic of disarmament during the first half of every year and an activity concerning the current geopolitical context during the second half of every year, in order to help establish an identity for the Committee, provided that there are sufficient resources in the Trust Fund;

8. *Invite* the secretariat of the Committee, in cooperation with civil society, to develop a communications strategy in order to increase the visibility of the Committee, including among the populations of the subregion;

9. *Endorse* the principle of having the work and activities of the Committee evaluated regularly, with a view to enhancing the Committee's effectiveness and its contribution to peace and security in Central Africa;

10. *Decide* to remain seized of the matter and request Cameroon to provide an update on the situation at the forty-fifth ministerial meeting of Committee.

DONE at Yaoundé on 2 June 2017